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ABSTRACT

The functional approach, which views language as a potential for meaning in social situations, seems particularly relevant in analyzing the dynamic interaction between text and context. Function determines structure, and the context, which comes to define the function, determines the kinds of text that will be communicative. As the contextual variables become less constraining, the psychological distance between participants increases and the text then needs to compensate by becoming increasingly complete or explicit in order for the semantic and pragmatic potential of language to be realized. The contexts in which a person selects either the oral or written mode are quite different, so that the function of the language event in the context varies and thus affects the structure and features of the text. In the oral mode, the situation is contextually more constrained and the text usually demonstrates less lexical density but more syntactic complexity and can rely more on aspects of context. In the written mode, the situation is less constrained and the text demonstrates greater lexical density but less syntactic complexity. (HOD)

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TEXT AND CONTEXT:

A DYNAMIC INTERACTION

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TEXT AND CONTEXT: A DYNAMIC INTERACTION

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Recent investigations into the essential character of language have proceeded generally from either one of two fundamental assumptions: nativism, with its focus on what the person brings to language acquisition and use; or environmentalism, with its focus on how the person's experiences in the world shape her language. Not mutually exclusive, these two assumptions reflect different emphases, both necessary for a total understanding of the complex phenomenon of language.

In studying the relationship between text and context--that is, in looking at how language happens in the world--the environmentalist or functionalist emphasis is particularly useful. In theorizing about thought and language, Vygotsky (1962) concludes that the "nature of [their] development itself changes, from biological to sociohistorical" (p.51) and that the functions of language--psychologically and socially--come to affect the structure. He notes, for example, that since inner speech is speech for oneself and external speech is for others, it is not surprising that their structures are so different (p.131).

Sociolinguist Halliday (1978) further elaborates upon this approach: "We are taking a functionalist view, in the sense that we are interested in what language can do, or rather in what the speaker, child or adult, can do with it; and that we try to explain the nature of language, its internal organization and patterning, in terms of the functions that it has evolved to serve"(p.16). The emphasis is on how patterns and structures of language have developed

from their functions in people's lives. Whereas a child masters the adult language system (the grammar) quite early in life, Halliday suggests that she will spend the rest of her childhood--perhaps the rest of her life--mastering the adult language; that is, mastering the ability to control and use the varieties of her language as they are appropriate to different situations (pp.27-28). Like Halliday, van Dijk (1977) too wants to expand the notion of a grammar to account not only for speakers' ability to construct "correct" utterances, but also for their ability to use such utterances adequately in communicative situations (p.13). The functionalist approach, thus, views language as a resource, as a potential for meaning in social situations.

This approach seems particularly relevant in analyzing the dynamic interaction between text and context, for "we choose utterances to fit situations, and text and context are therefore inter-related parts of a whole" (Gregory and Carroll, 1978, p.v). The hypothesis to be explored in this paper is based on the working assumption that function determines structure: that is, that the context, which comes to define the function, determines the kind of text that will be communicative. The text--embedded in a particular context--becomes meaningful to the hearer/reader, not because he does not know what the speaker/writer is going to say, but rather because he has "abundant evidence, both from his knowledge of the general (including statistical) properties of the linguistic system and from his sensitivity to the particular cultural, situational, and verbal context" (Halliday, 1978, p.9), which enables him to predict the meanings that are coming his way. In a highly contextually constrained situation, the psychological distance between participants is so small that the text need contain only a few

linguistic cues; for example, when a woman enters her home and plops down on the couch, after having completed her defense of her dissertation, her text--"Finished"--fully realizes the meaning potential for her husband.

Thus the hypothesis of this paper is that as any or all of the contextual variables become less constraining (i.e., participants do not share a knowledge of the subject, are strangers, come from different cultures, etc.), the psychological distance between participants increases; the text then needs to compensate by becoming increasingly complete or explicit--what I shall later refer to as "endophoric"--in order for the semantic and pragmatic potential of language to be realized. In explaining this hypothesis, I will speculate about some of the possible relevant features that may constitute these contextual variables and then consider, from that perspective, what differences, if any, may exist between oral and written language texts.

Several disclaimers are necessary in this preliminary definition of terms. First, I am focusing on merely one language event--a monologue-type text from speaker/writer to hearer/reader. Second, discussion of context variables will be limited to those features that are relevant to how meaning is constrained and thus communicated. Third, text refers to a semantic unit that is realized linguistically as a structured, cohesive whole, irrespective of its size; and the key textual dimension that I am investigating is the amount of explicitly stated information. An Exit sign and the "Finished" used earlier will be considered examples of texts at the "exophoric" end of my text continuum, because most of the reference and meaning is external to the text; whereas a scholarly journal article or a class lecture on "Stage Models in Writing" will be considered examples of

highly "endophoric" texts, because much of the meaning and reference is internal to the text. Finally, stylistic and rhetorical aspects of texts will not be included: questions of syntactic choices such as parallelism, the emotional effects on readers, genre requirements, etc. raise further issues that cannot be dealt with here. My focus is on the direct conveying of meaning, not the creation and effect of specialized texts.

Let's begin with contextual variables. Clearly these variables overlap and interact, yet each can be manipulated individually and thus be investigated separately. The following discussion is intended to be merely speculative and suggestive, not definitive or complete.

At a concrete level is the physical variable of context. Actual physical location of a language event may affect the communication of meaning. The meaning of an Exit sign, for example, is successfully constrained when it is placed appropriately over the side door of a movie theater; but the same sign displayed on a bookshelf as an object no longer serves the same semantic or pragmatic purpose: i.e., in case of fire, no one would try to leave the room by way of the bookshelf.[1] In oral language the communication of meaning can be enhanced by the physical gestures of the participants: finger pointing, shrugging, blank looks, smiles, nods, etc. all may work to constrain meaning; similar results can be achieved in written language by physical resources such as underlining, paragraphing, changing type, etc. Setting, place, and timing may also constrain meaning by setting up expectations: a lecture hall defines the kind of language events that typically occur there. These physical constraints may reduce

[1]Presumably the Exit sign as object does not simply become "meaningless" but rather joins a higher level of semiotic structure--art.

the amount of information necessary in a text--whether oral or written. And at a fundamental level, linguistic communication relies upon physical transmission--conversants must be in hearing distance of each other, the telephones and typewriters must be working. If there is a lot of noise in a room or if the telephone connection is faulty, participants may compensate by increasing the amount of information in the text--fuller enunciation, repeated lexical items, more propositions, etc.[2]

The linguistic variable has both a concrete and an abstract aspect. At the physical level is the actual surface structure string--the phonetic string in oral language, the graphic representation in written--generated by the abstract deep structure. This string needs to be syntactically well-formed and clearly spoken/written in order for any communication to occur. In this paper we will simply assume this level of the linguistic aspect of context as a given, for without it no communication would take place.

The theoretical constructs of Teun A. van Dijk (1977) provide valuable insights into the more abstract part of this linguistic contextual variable. He wants to enlarge upon the notion of a grammar to include "the general conditions, morpho-syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic [that determine] the well-formedness, interpretability, and appropriateness, respectively, of any discourse of a particular language" (p.5). A grammar needs to account not just for the individual's ability to produce well-formed utterances, but also for his ability to interpret and use them. The rules for this "macro-interpretation" are part of the "semantic competence of language users" (p.7), he says, not just a part of their general cognitive

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[2]An alternative, of course, is to reduce the amount of information in the text--to simplify--but that's another issue, a part of editing or monitoring in actual performance based on feedback, whereby a speaker could re-evaluate the contextual constraints and generate a new text.

processes of comprehension. Thus van Dijk's model overlaps with the domain of generative grammar on the one side and with cognitive psychology on the other.

Briefly, in his model of a text grammar, a text has a micro-structure (a sequence of sentences, for example, that contains semantic propositions) and a macro-structure (an overall "gist" or global semantic representation) which are related by transformational rules that reduce and integrate the semantic propositions from the micro-structure into the global representation in the macro-structure.

The key concept that I am employing from van Dijk is coherence--when a text (an abstract theoretical construct that underlies discourse) is well-formed, interpretable, and appropriate. A minimal condition for coherence between propositions at the micro-structure level is their connection with the same or related topic of conversation (p.52). This semantic connectedness depends on the way propositions relate in terms of conjunction, implication, and cause and effect, which may then be expressed in natural language by coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, sentential adverbs, prepositions, etc. At the macro-structure level, coherence is effected by the topic of discourse, as it organizes, reduces, and categorizes the semantic information of sentence sequences as a whole (p.134). The macro-structure then allows for sentences to be unrelated to each other, yet related to the macro-structuring topic.

Coherence involves further, says van Dijk, pragmatics: "The basic idea of pragmatics is that when we are speaking in certain contexts we also accomplish certain social acts" (p.218). The context, for van Dijk, is a "highly idealized abstraction from [a communicative

situation] and contains only those facts which systematically determine the appropriateness of conventional utterances" (p.191). And it is within the context that utterances are turned into acts. A sentence is intended not only to express a proposition but also to serve a function in a situation, such as to inform, to warn, to order, to question, or to thank. For example, the sentence "'It is hot in here' could be used in different situations to assess that it is hot in the room, request someone to open the window, request someone to close the window, warn someone not to enter the room, and so on" (Clark and Clark, 1977, p.29).

At the pragmatic level in the micro-structure sentences that are semantically equivalent may differ pragmatically, such as in the topic-comment relationship: consider 'Peter had an accident. He is in the hospital' versus 'Peter is in the hospital because he had an accident' (van Dijk, 1977, p.213). Or sentences may be not directly related semantically but joined by pragmatic considerations: 'It is cold in here and please shut the window' (p.213). At the macro-structure level van Dijk postulates macro-speech acts that reduce, integrate, and organize information and thus create coherence. "Just as we say, in the semantics, that a discourse has this topic or theme or is about such and such, we may say, in the pragmatics, that is has this 'point' or 'purpose' or 'functioning' . . . ." (p.246).

The linguistic variable may become less constrained when coherence is reduced at any level of this text model. If the on-going discourse is less coherent, each particular text may need to contain more explicit information in order to convey meaning. For example, at the semantic micro-structure level, in an energetic discussion of the innateness hypothesis, various participants may express widely divergent

thoughts, which are then not sequentially-connected propositions, but rather relate only to the general topic; thus each text may need to be quite explicit. The American Indian story experiment from Bartlett's Remembering suggests how communication can be less constrained at the semantic macro-structure level when the story is based on an unfamiliar discourse schema; so the non-American Indian may require a fuller text in order to understand the story. Similarly, a poorly organized lecture, with few marco-structure clues, may need to be more explicit in order to be comprehended. At the pragmatic micro-structure level, the sentence 'It is hot in here' may not be a clear request to close a window; and at the pragmatic macro-structure level, a young man's insistent series of assertions about a mutual class with a young woman may be constrained only at the macro-level where it is clearly a request for a date.

This variable leads quite naturally into a discussion of the psychological or intra-personal variable in the communicative situation; in one sense, this linguistic aspect is a specific, though separate, part of the underlying general cognitive structure and processing capabilitites of the individual.[3] One interesting way to explore the role of cognition in communication is to review, as a metaphor, the model of knowledge structures proposed by Schank and Abelson (1977).

The model evolved out of the principle of causal chaining from Schank's earlier Conceptual Dependency Theory. They assume that the meaning of a text is much more than the mere sum of the meanings of the individual sentences that comprise it and that the connection between

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[3]I intend to explore tentatively only one aspect of cognition and not the affective side of the psychological variable; yet clearly those affective factors contribute greatly to the communication situation and influence the conveying of meaning.

propositions in a text is not always--or even often--explicitly realized in the surface structure. So, for example, "if we hear that X caused Y, we must ask if X could cause Y directly and if it cannct, we must figure out the intermediate events" (p.24). Schank and Abelson then reconstruct the causal syntax of underlying natural thought by articulating a set of action primitives (eg., grasp, ingest, expel, etc.) that represent basic elements of actions in propositions, along with inference rules that can then operate to construct the causal relations. "A text is disconnected if a causal chain cannot be constructed to represent it" (p.30).

All the knowledge people have about the world is classified by Schank and Abelson as general and specific: "General knowledge enables a person to understand and interpret another person's actions simply because the other person is a human being with certain standard needs who lives in a world which has certain standard methods of getting those needs fulfilled" (p.37). Specific knowledge (which their model is about), on the other hand, allows people to interpret and participate in events they have been through many times. Two mechanisms are needed to process these frequently occurring events or groupings of causal chains: one to fulfill the need to refer to frequent event sequences in a sketchy manner and one to recover steps left out of a chain(p.38). The "sketch" is labeled a script, "a pre-determined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known structure" (p.41). The restaurant script is a famous example of these sequences, but there are many, many more, such as trip, romancer, good Samaritan, spy, jealous spouse, etc.

More general than a script is a plan--"the repository for general information that will connect events that cannot be connected by the use of an available script or by a standard causal chain sequence"

(p.70). Plans are used to describe the set of choices that a person has when he seeks to accomplish a goal or when he seeks to make sense of seemingly disconnected discourse. Consider this text: 'John knew that his wife's operation would be very expensive. There was always Uncle Harry. He reached for the suburban phone book.' The individual sentences make sense because a plan--raising money for an expensive operation--connects the goal state with a series of possible actions (p.71). Thus plans are more general than scripts and realize goals such as to know, to gain control over a physical object, to attain power, to persuade and to use physical mechanisms to get somewhere (pp.84-85). An individual, continue Schank and Abelson, at any particular time has standardized goals as well as specific ones based on his set of beliefs and expectancy rules.

And finally Schank and Abelson introduce the even more general notion of themes to account for what generates goals. Role themes refer to a specific person's goals as determined by his role (doctor, lawyer, daughter, etc.); interpersonal themes cover such things as friend, mentor, father/son, enemy, jilted lover; and life themes describe a person's general aim or position in life. All these levels--script, plan, goal, theme--are interrelated and necessary parts of the apparatus of one's knowledge structures and thus part too of the psychological context in a communicative situation.

Participants in a language event have acquired a huge repertoire of scripts, plans, goals, and themes as they have made sense out of their experiences in the world. In a highly constrained situation, the participants' knowledge structures would be so 'in tune' that the text could be minimal. Consider the story of Kitty and Levin's declaration of love in Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (as quoted in Vygotsky, 1962, p.140):

"I have long wished to ask you something."
"Please do."
"This," he said, and wrote the initial letters: W y a: i c n b, d y m t o n. These letters meant: "When you answered: it can not be, did you mean then or never?" It seemed impossible that she would be able to understand the complicated sentence.
"I understand,"she said, blushing.
"What word is that?" he asked, pointing to the n which stood for "never."
"The word is 'never,'" she said, "but that is not true." He quickly erased what he had written, handed her the chalk, and rose. She wrote: I c n a o t.
His face brightened suddenly: he had understood. It meant: "I could not answer otherwise then."
She wrote the initial letters: s t y m f a f w h. This meant: "So that you might forget and forgive what happened."
He seized the chalk with tense, trembling fingers, broke it, and wrote the initial letters of the following: "I have nothing to forget and forgive. I never ceased loving you."
"I understand," she whispered.

The script--perhaps we could call it a proposal script--and the plan, goals, and themes--love and marriage--are obviously so synchronized between the speech participants that the role of language is reduced to a minimum in this highly successful communication of meaning. As similarity in the knowledge structures of the participants is less constraining, the text might need to be more and more explicit. An extreme, obviously hypothetical example might be a text to explain marriage proposals to a Martian; such a text might need to explicate and represent fully the causal connection between real world events and the scripts, plans, goals, and themes that motivate and underlie these events. (See Schank and Abelson for instances of simple stories fully represented in conceptual dependency and knowledge structure terms.) Combined with the affective part of the psychological variable, these knowledge structures can be a powerful constraint on the communication of meaning.

A language event, however, can also be analyzed from the interpersonal or social perspective. As Halliday argues in Language

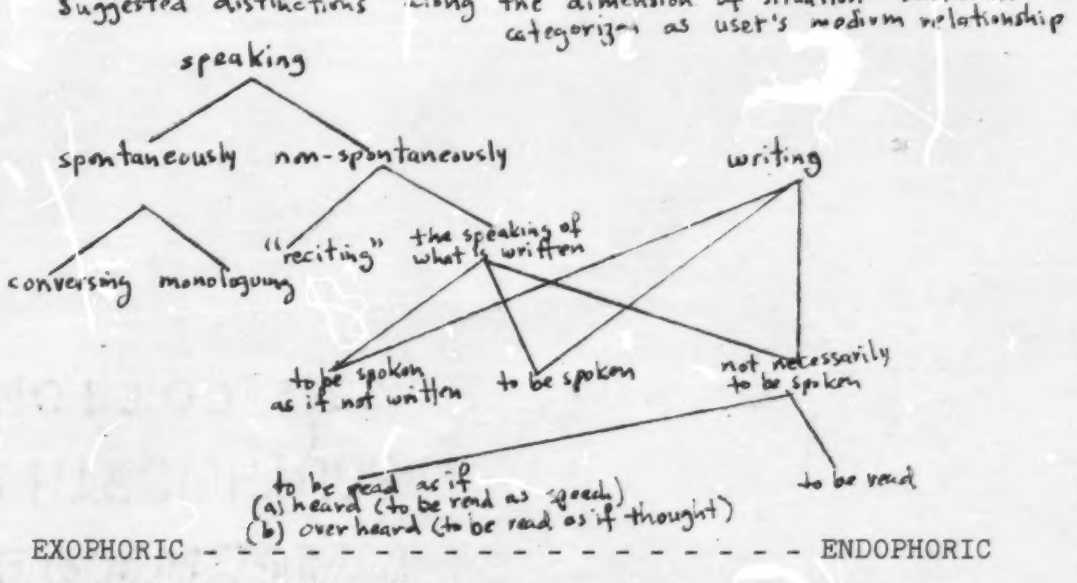
as Social Semiotic, language consists, not of sentences, but of texts that linguistically realize the meaning potential in interpersonal contexts of one kind or another. Register, the important concept from Halliday that I am utilizing here, is defined as a semantic configuration that is determined by three relevant aspects of the communication situation and that shapes the features of the particular text, including--but not limited to--the amount of explicitly stated information.

The first aspect--field--recognizes the reality that language use varies according to what the participants are doing: "in different contexts, we tend to select different words and different grammatical patterns--simply because we are expressing different kinds of meaning" (p.221). Field refers to the actual setting, to the subject matter, and to the activities of the participants; for example, buying-selling a newspaper is a field of discourse. "This is a more general concept than that of subject matter, and more useful . . . since we may not actually be talking about either buying or selling or newspapers. We may be talking about the weather; but that does not mean that the field of discourse is meteorology--talking about the weather is part of the strategy of buying and selling" (p.222). Tenor, the second determinant of register, refers to the relationship between the participants and thus varies according to the level of formality, of technicality, etc. Examples of these role relationships are teacher/pupil, parent/child, and doctor/patient. And the final determinant, mode, acknowledges that the language people use differs according to the channel selected, and especially fundamental is the distinction between oral and written language. Mode determines the texture of the language, the way the text hangs together in terms of its internal organization and also in terms of the cohesive links be-

tween sentences. Field, tenor, and mode combine to create a certain register, which then affects the kind of text that will be produced.

Register is thus a powerful determinant of, and constraint on, the communication of meaning that seems to be quite real in the way people make sense of language events. "There is an experiment . . . in which the subjects listen to a recording that is 'noisy' in the technical sense . . . so that they cannot understand anything of what is being said. They are then given a simple clue as to the register, and next time they listen they understand practically the whole text" (p.226). In a sense, the notion of register relates to Schank and Abelson's script, not as part of one's knowledge structure but rather viewed from a sociological perspective as behavior.

I'd like to consider ways in which the features of register can specifically affect the amount of information that is explicitly realized in a text. Gregory and Carroll (1978) have expanded on the notion of register by suggesting distinctions that can be made along the dimension of mode which demonstrate that the language user's choice of mode may affect the amount of information:


Suggested distinctions along the dimension of situation variation categorized as user's medium relationship
speaking
spontaneously
non-spontaneously
writing
conversing
monologuing
"reciting"
the speaking of what is written
to be spoken as if not written
to be spoken
not necessarily to be spoken
to be read as if (a) heard (to be read as speech) (b) overheard (to be read as if thought)
to be read
EXOPHORIC
ENDOPHORIC

From left to right along the continuum, the texts would become increasingly endophoric.

In regard to tenor, too, Gregory and Carroll note "that there is an inverse relationship between the degree of formality existing between two people and the need to make information verbally explicit; the more knowledge two people share, the less they need to talk about it"(pp.51-52). Thus both mode and tenor may relate to the amount of explicit information contained in the text itself.

Finally, two fundamental insights from structuralism may serve to suggest how the cultural variable contributes to constrain the communication of meaning. First, as Culler (1975) points out, "social and cultural phenomena are not simply material objects or events but objects and events with meaning and hence signs; and second, that they do not have essences but are defined by a network of relations . . . ." (p.4). Meaning thus is possible because of an underlying system of distinctions and conventions that may vary from culture to culture. Faced with a marriage ceremony or a game of football, for example, a person from a culture where these events do not occur, could present an external description of the actions but not grasp their meaning; in this sense, then, culture consists of a set of symbolic systems. In a constrained communicative situation, these systems are shared, perhaps tacitly, by the participants, so that in order to discuss football scores, the text need not contain explicitly stated information such as 'football is a competitive game played on a field of grass by two teams of eleven persons.' The cultural variable of context might be viewed as an expanded script. As the cultural features of the context become increasingly less shared or constrained, the text may need to be increasingly explicit about the cultural meanings of acts and objects.

To summarize, I have rather arbitrarily subdivided context into five clearly overlapping parts in order to begin to catalogue the numerous and complex aspects of context that may influence and shape how meaning is linguistically realized in texts: the physical setting or actions of the participants, the semantic and pragmatic levels of discourse, the knowledge structures of the participants, their social relationships, aspects of the social situation, and the underlying cultural semiotic system. I would now like to further define texts before analyzing differences between oral and written texts.

Let's begin with what a text is not. Typical of many commonly-held, but rather narrow definitions is Olson's developmental and cultural contrast between "utterance"--an informal oral language statement--and "text"--explicit, written prose (Olson, 1977,p.258). Taking (wisely) a functionalist approach, Olson sees language before the invention of writing systems as "shaped or biased to fit the requirements of oral communication and auditory memory" (p.263), thus employing devices such as mnemonic patterns of speech, recital ritual, the use of drums, etc. With the invention of print, however, writing became more explicit at the semantic level so that texts, says Olson, became "autonomous representations of meaning . . . [and the writer's task] was to write in such a manner that the sentence was an adequate, explicit representation of the meaning, relying on no implicit premises or personal interpretation" (p.268). Such assigning of language events into two possible categories seems to me to impose artificial, limited distinctions and distorts the pervasiveness of context--no text is truly autonomous.

I prefer to turn to the definitions of text offered by the theorists already mentioned in this paper in search for an alternative

definition. Gregory and Carroll (1978) define a text, not by its surface structure, as Olson does, but rather as a semantic unit with sentences being the lexico-grammatical realization of it, but not the text itself (p.87). They continue that a text is a unified whole, regardless of length, and not just a random collection of sentences; in judging the status of a piece of language as a text or not, Gregory and Carroll claim that we respond not only "to linguistic clues (internal evidence) but also to situational clues (external evidence) . . . by taking into account all we know of the environment: what's going on, who is involved, as well as what part language is playing. . . ."(p.90). van Dijk emphasizes the abstract nature of text by calling it "the abstract theoretical construct underlying what is usually called a discourse" (p.2) that is well-formed, interpretable, and appropriate to the situation.

Halliday (1978) locates text between the abstract level of sociological meaning and the physical level of sentences, thus defining "text as a semantic unit, irrespective of size, with sentences and other grammatical units as the realization of it" (p.70). The semantic system, says Halliday, consists of four functional components: the ideational, which can be subdivided into experiential and logical, the interpersonal, and the textual. It is the textual component that enables the others to operate: "language can effectively express ideational and interpersonal meanings only because it can create a text" (p.130). This textual component embodies three text-forming resources of the linguistic system. First, the structure of the text is derived in part from the theme and information systems in language. Cohesion, the second resource, is actualized through devices such as reference, substitution, conjunction, and ellipsis.

And the form a text takes is also a property of the genre, which, as Halliday uses it, is a broad notion that includes not only literary genres such as narrative but also genres of informal conversation; in this sense, all discourse has a generic structure (p.134).

In there such a thing as a non-text? Yes, but non-texts are not normally encountered in life. Halliday presents an example, constructed for illustrative purposes only, of a passage with scrambled thematic structure that is thus a non-text:

> Now comes the President here. It's the window he's stepping through to wave to the crowd. On his victory his opponent congratulates him. What they are shaking now is hands. A speech is going to be made by him . . . . (p.134).

Perhaps too the speech of quite young children is non-text, but what is mostly important in discussing text is not the non-text/text contrast, but rather the consideration of how much interpretative weight is external (as in exophoric texts) and how much is internal (as in endophoric texts).

The aspect that most intrigues me in the text-context interaction that I have been trying to expand upon above is its relationship to the issue of the differences and similarities between the two parallel and alternative language systems--oral and written. After first considering developmental and process differences between the two, I will look at the various functions these systems typically serve in the contexts in which they normally take place and then at what happens to these distinctions in terms of our capacity to fully implement speech and writing in creating texts.

Learning to create written texts develops later and more laboriously than learning to talk. Theorizing that "the development of the child's spontaneous concepts [such as oral language] proceeds upward, and the development of his scientific concepts [such as written language]

downward" (p.108), Vygotsky (1962) can explain how oral language is mastered almost unconsciously, while written language usually requires training. It necessitates conscious, deliberate, rather abstract learning--to master the second degree of symbolization required in using written signs, to address an absent interlocutor, to sustain motivation, to expand the minimal and compact syntax of inner speech into its exact opposite, and to explain fully the situation in order to be understood; that is, to master the task of the "deliberate structuring of the web of meaning" (p.101). His description usefully and eloquently summarizes the significant differences and difficulties in acquiring written language.

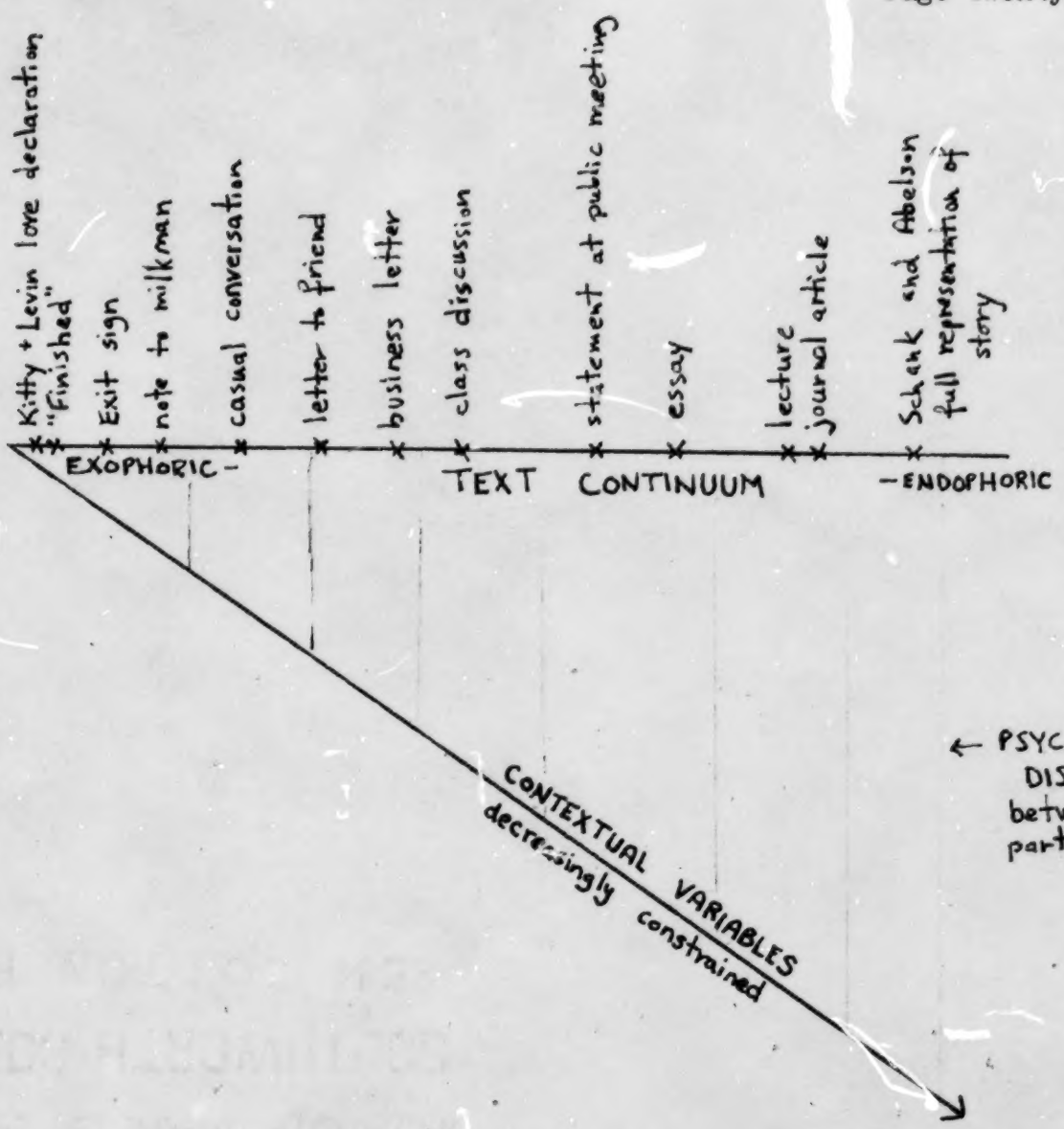
Furthermore, learning to write is not merely an expansion of knowing how to talk; as Bereiter and Scardamalia point out, "the oral language system cannot be carried over intact into written composition but must in some way be reconstructed so as to function 'autonomously' [qualifying quotation marks mine] instead of interactively" (p.8). They go on to suggest that beginning writers need to learn how to use more closed discourse schemata (i.e., schemata instantiated with no social input) to compensate for the way people in conversation help each other by providing cues--"cues to proceed, cues to stop, cues to elaborate, cues to shift topic, and a great variety of cues that stir memory" (p.6).

A functionalist approach to explaining why writing is often a difficult language system to master comes from Halliday (1978): "The children who don't learn to read and write, by and large, are children to whom it doesn't make sense; to whom the functional extension that these media provide has not been made clear, or does not match up with their own expectations of what language is for" (p. 57).

Thus writing develops later and more slowly and consciously than does talking. And, in a sense, writing seems always to be developing in that each new writing task--typically--requires conscious control over the resources and constraints of the task. Talking, on the other hand, being more automatic, often seems early in life to be an equilibrated, accomplished, mastered system.

The contexts in which a person typically selects either the oral or written mode are quite different, so that the function of the language event in the context varies and thus affects the structure and features of the text. Typically a person selects the oral mode in contextually more constrained communicative situations, such as face-to-face conversation; the text, usually demonstrating less lexical density but more syntactic complexity (Poole, 1976; Halliday, 1978), can rely more on aspects of context and thus be more exophoric. When a person chooses the written mode, such as in writing letters or class assignments, the situation is usually less constrained because the intended reader(s) is not present at the time of text production; the written text, typically, demonstrates greater lexical density but less syntactic complexity and is more endophoric.

This distinction, however, becomes problematic when one moves away from what people typically do into what our capacity is to use these alternative language systems, as the figure on the next page is intended to suggest:


Kitty + Levin love declaration "finished"
Exit sign
note to milkman
casual conversation
letter to friend
business letter
class discussion
statement at public meeting
essay
lecture
journal article
Schank and Abelson full representation of story
EXOPHORIC
TEXT CONTINUUM
ENDOPHORIC
CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES decreasingly constrained
← PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE between participants

In a highly constrained context, the initial letter text in the Kitty and Levin tale or the "Finished" text used earlier need only be minimal in order to realize the semantic and pragmatic potential of the situation. On the other hand, both an article in a journal and a class lecture are far less constrained contextually and would require greater explicit elaboration in the text; there may even be little lexical and syntactic differences between the two texts. As Abercrombie is quoted as saying, "we have recognized . . . that the piece of spoken English and the piece of written English are the same language embodied in different mediums" (Gregory and Carroll, 1978, p.37). We have the capacity to produce quite endophoric texts in both the oral and the written language.

If this text-context equation makes sense and does account in some small way for the interaction between text and context in the communication of meaning, many more questions need to be considered.

First, one wonders how rhetorical concerns would impact this relationship. It has been noted that communication can occur because people assume two working principles: the reality principle, which asserts the belief that speech participants refer to situations and sets of ideas that make sense; and the cooperative principle, which assumes that speech participants will tell the truth, say all that is needed to make sense, be relevant, and use language clearly and unambiguously (Clark and Clark, 1977, pp.72-73). But the rhetorical dimension adds possibilities that the text is created, not to provide information, but to persuade, or convince, or manipulate, or even lie to the reader. One might speculate that these rhetorical decisions are a secondary aspect of communication and then consider their effect on the text-context interaction.

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